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## Abandoned Mine Lands

Abandoned mine land reclamation took a step forward in 1977 when the U.S. Congress enacted Public Law 95-87, the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA). The act outlined specific requirements for the reclamation of lands mined after May 2, 1977, and established programs and funding for reclaiming abandoned coal mine lands. In January 1982, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources' Land Reclamation Program received approval from the U.S. Department of Interior's Office of Surface Mining to operate the abandoned mine land program and to conduct reclamation work in Missouri. The Land Reclamation Program also administers Missouri's reclamation laws for active mines. The department is the administrative authority working through the Land Reclamation Commission.

Under SMCRA, state and tribal Abandoned Mine Land programs must give priority to reclamation of abandoned coal mines. However, Section 409 of the Act provides that, at the request of the Governor of the state or the head of the tribal body, non-coal reclamation projects may be undertaken on a case-by-case basis before the priorities related to past coal mining have been fulfilled. Reclamation of such non-coal abandoned mine land sites must be necessary for the protection of the public health, safety and general welfare from extreme danger, thereby meeting Priority I problem criteria.

The Land Reclamation Program received approval to use abandoned mine land funds for closure of Priority I non-coal shafts in Missouri in August 2001. Closures of Priority I shafts began in February 2002.

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| <b>Priority I</b>   | The protection of public health, safety and general welfare from extreme danger resulting from the adverse effects of past coal mining practices.            |
| <b>Priority II</b>  | The protection of public health, safety and general welfare from the adverse effects of past coal mining practices that do not constitute an extreme danger. |
| <b>Priority III</b> | Restoration of land and water resources and the environment previously degraded by the adverse effects of past coal mining practices.                        |

## Making Progress

The department's Land Reclamation Program has made significant strides in eliminating public health, safety and environmental problems from past mining areas. Health and safety problems (Priority I and II) include dangerous piles of mine refuse and embankments, burning coal refuse, highwalls, subsidence, open shafts, hazardous mining facilities and polluted water used for agricultural and human consumption. Environmental problems (Priority III) include bare acidic spoils and coal refuse that pollute water through soil erosion, sedimentation and acid mine drainage.

Missouri completed its first reclamation project in November 1982. As of June 2002, 93 projects totaling 3,916 acres have been reclaimed in Missouri. Most projects were located on private land. Reclamation costs are solely the responsibility of the department.

However, landowners who purchased their land after 1977 and have reclamation conducted by the department's Land Reclamation Program on their property may be subject to a lien being placed on the property for any projected increase in land value. Owners who purchased abandoned mine lands prior to 1977 are not subject to a lien.

## Abandoned Mine Land Funding

Missouri's abandoned mine land program is funded by a federal tax on coal. The U.S. Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement collects a fee from producing coal companies. The office charges 35 cents per ton of surface mined coal and 15 cents per ton of coal mined underground. Money collected from coal mining is deposited into the Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Fund. The Office of Surface Mining disperses these funds through grants to the states as directed by the U.S. Congress.

As of June 2002, Missouri received \$67.3 million in federal funding. However, because of declining coal production, Missouri and other Midwestern states have received decreasing allocations. Since 1987, the U.S. Congress has included a minimum base funding amount in the abandoned mine land appropriation to allow the states with significant coal mine problems, but limited coal production, to continue their programs.

Since 1994, Missouri received \$1.5 million per year from the Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Fund. Missouri also received approximately \$165,000 per year in Clean Streams Initiative funding since 1999. These monies are spent to alleviate water quality problems due to past coal mining.

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## Landowner Assistance

Most abandoned mine lands in Missouri do not require reclamation, naturally providing wildlife habitats and outdoor recreational opportunities such as fishing. However, the department offers technical assistance to owners of abandoned mine lands. Staff personnel can provide expertise in soils, revegetation and water quality. Assistance includes reclamation literature, workshops and on-site visits with landowners to discuss their problems and to improve revegetation and water quality of their property.

The department encourages the public to report the occurrence of vertical openings and recent subsidence events related to abandoned mines. For technical assistance or to report mine related problems, please contact the department's Land Reclamation Program at

1-800-361-4827

or

(573) 751-4041

**Land Reclamation Mission:**  
To assure beneficial restoration  
of mined lands and to protect  
public health, safety and the  
environment from the adverse  
effects of mining within the  
state of Missouri.

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## Information on the Web

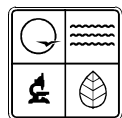
### Missouri Department of Natural Resources

Land Reclamation Program  
<http://www.dnr.state.mo.us/alpd/lrp/>

Outreach and Assistance Center  
<http://www.dnr.state.mo.us/oac/>

General department information  
<http://www.dnr.state.mo.us>

The complete Missouri Mining Law:  
<http://www.moga.state.mo.us/statutes/c444.htm>

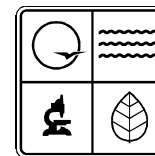


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Air and Land Protection Division  
Land Reclamation Program

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